

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.

The last time we were together, we looked at the structure of the book of 1 Corinthians, and we saw that when we look at passages like 1:11, 5:1, and 7:1, there are three major sections in what we call the main body of the book. And then we saw that in 7:1 through 16, Paul indicates the organization of that because he's responding to questions and issues that the Corinthians had written about by saying to them, now concerning this or now concerning that, and ticks off a number of major issues and questions.

Today, we're going to begin the actual text of the book of 1 Corinthians. And you should have notepad number 6 in front of you. That will be about pages 50 to 52, only three pages for this.

And if for any reason that's not paginated, all your pages are paginated, but this one on mine was missed. It'll probably be corrected by the time you get it. Just write 50, 51, and 52 on those pages so you can keep track of them. All right, you should have your Bible open and with you.

If you do study any from the Greek text, it would be handy to have that as well. I want to talk to you about a New Testament letter to begin with on page 50. The book of 1 Corinthians, like all of Paul's writings, is debated as to whether Paul wrote Hebrews.

That would be one exception if, perchance, he did. That would not be in letter format. But Paul wrote these as letters.

Even Romans has a letter genre, even though the way that the Romans are organized is a little bit different than a typical letter, particularly in terms of the main body of the letter and the logic that Paul portrays there. Now, in a New Testament letter, we are calling them epistles in our Bible. The term letter is usually referred to as an epistle when you're talking about the New Testament.

That's more of a tradition in the way that we translate a certain word. Actually, the epistle is not actually a translation. It is what we call a transliteration of the Greek word epistole.

You take the letters of the Greek word and the letters of the English and you put them together, you get epistle for epistole, which is the actual word. But if you translate epistole, then you get the word letter. That's what we're dealing with.

These are certainly long letters. Some would perhaps argue that while Paul uses Greco-Roman letter form, he's deviated from what we find in our surface sources from the period. Many, many letters were quite short, as I'll show you in a moment.

Now, notice in paragraph 2, the second sentence, the New Testament consistently uses the term epistole, and I gave you the transliteration of it in English letters there, to refer to written correspondence like this. I've given a number of texts. I'm not going to do a Bible drill on these tapes.

You can look those up, but in the book of Acts, in the book of Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and even in 2 Peter, we have this term being used, and it's consistently the idea of a letter. And as we've already mentioned, it's a translated letter, but it's a transliterated epistole, and that's the word that's sort of stuck in our Christian traditions. By ancient standards, most New Testament epistles are of this letter genre.

Now, we've used that word before, but let me just remind you that the word genre, G-E-N-R-E, is on the page. The word genre has to do with a kind of literature. Poetry is a poetic genre. That means that that form is a kind of literature.

Proverbs are a genre. They're a kind of literature. Narrative is a genre. Epistle is a genre. Apocalyptic is a genre. Gospel is a genre.

So, you have in the Bible lots of genres, lots of kinds of literature. Now, literature means in terms of its genre, and the genre of a letter is very important to get your arms around so that you grasp how this letter means. Genre has to do with epistles in terms of what we call occasional literature.

A letter is written to people from a writer. They share a pool of information. The people who receive the letter know that pool.

The person who writes the letter knows that pool. Historically, that's how it happened, and then we come to these letters 2,000 years later, and we don't share the pool. We have our pool, and the danger is that we can take their words and put them into our pool and, to follow up on the analogy, make them swim the way we see it, whereas our main context is to see it the way they saw it.

Therefore, when we look at a letter, we remember that it is occasioned by something. Therefore, we call it occasional literature, and we realize that when we

read one of these letters, we're reading one end of the telephone. I used that illustration a little earlier that we had a one-way telephone conversation.

We have half of it. The other half is on the other end of the line. Now, not the other half in terms of the completeness of the literature that we have in front of us.

We have complete sentences. We have paragraphs, and those paragraphs yield meaning, and yet at the same time, they yield meaning in terms of the context in which they were originally written. As a result, we need to understand something about the other end of the telephone.

What was going on? What was the way that they thought? How was Paul trying to change the way they thought? To find the nuances in the text that we have in front of us. Now, as letters, by ancient standards, these letters had a certain form. You can look up, I've suggested here, in a dictionary, the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.

If you happen to have Anchor Bible Dictionary, you can look up letter and find it there. You may look up epistle, and it will probably cross-reference the two. Letter form in the first century contained certain characteristics.

In the middle of page 50, I've laid these out for you. Letters in the ancient world had an introduction. Sometimes we can refer to that as a salutation.

It's more than a salutation; it's the introduction. It includes a salutation. The introduction would include an identification of the sender, the addressee, or addressees.

Some statement of greeting. Usually, there's a wish for the recipient's good health. Or, as we find in the letters of the New Testament, a statement of thanksgiving about them.

So, there's something about the audience, and there's something about the writer that's contained in the prescript, the salutation, the introduction. Then, after that, and that's relatively brief most of the time, a few verses, we have what's known as the main body of the letter. The main body will contain the content and information that the writer intends to convey.

Be it brief, like 2 John or 3 John, that aren't even set out in chapters because they're so brief. The book of Jude, and the book of Philemon, are all letters. As a result, they have an introduction, a salutation; they have a text or a main body.

And Corinthians is a huge main body, and it's long. So, it's not the size that determines its nature, it's its placement. And so, the text of 1 Corinthians is in the middle. That's the body of the letter.

Then, you have a conclusion or a closing. In the closings of letters, you have greetings. Usually, they're greetings to other people that the writer wasn't directly addressing within the letter. These are gold mines that help us understand some of the historical context.

Some of these closings are quite long, and they name a lot of people. Many times, when you read the Bible and when I read the Bible, we get to that, and we say, well, I don't know who these people are, so I've really gotten the guts of this letter, so I'll just not spend much time there. They kind of get neglected.

But there's a tremendous amount of information in terms of personal names, who's doing what, and the activities that this community is portraying, besides showing us the personal side of the writer. So we've got greetings, we've got wishes once again, final greetings or prayer sentences.

Sometimes, there's dating. Most of the ancient letters, secular letters, ended with a date. Don't we wish the apostles had followed that aspect of letter genre and put a date at the end of each of these letters?

While we're confident that we have reconstructed the dates of most letters relatively closely, wouldn't it have been nice if they had just gone ahead and followed this format to the fullest degree and included a date for us? So you have an introduction, text, or body of the letter, and you have a conclusion. Now, I've given you on page 50 a sample of a secular letter that's relatively contemporary with the time of the New Testament.

So, you can see what a letter would have looked like that someone would have written. Serapion to his brothers Ptolemaeus and Apollonius. Greeting.

If you are well, it would be excellent. I myself am well. Good economy of terms there, isn't it? I have made a contract with Paris's daughter and intend to marry her in Missouri in the month.

Please send me a half ethos of oil or half chorus of oil. I have written to you to let you know. Goodbye.

Year 28. Month 21 or day 21. The month comes next, and then the day.

And then he says, has an afterthought. Come for the wedding day. Apollonius.

Consequently, we have a very brief letter. We found a lot of these kinds of correspondence. This is just one example that's taken from Doty, who has a volume of ancient letters.

Now notice some things about this letter. First of all, it identifies the writer of the letter as Serapion. He writes to his brothers.

My assumption in this case is these are real brothers, not like the Bible where it's writing to fellow believers. But it's a secular letter.

So, it's writing to these two brothers, Ptolemaeus and Apollonius. And then it has the word greeting. Underline the word greeting.

The greeting was a part of the letter form. And I'll talk about that when we talk about the epistles in a moment. And then he says, if you are well, it would be excellent.

I am well. Well, there's that wish for well-being. I wish for goodness to be part of the recipient of the letter.

Then, we have the main body of the letter. I have made a contract. And that goes on for a while.

I'm writing you to know. Then we have the conclusion. Goodbye.

With the date. An afterthought. Come for the wedding day.

And then we also have Apollonius' name. Now, so the term greeting is used in this letter, and we only have a few places in the New Testament where we get that exact same thing, which is sort of the salutation. Now, the greeting is from the Greek word *kairein*.

You'll notice it in the bottom paragraph there. That's the standard Greek salutation. We've got three of these in the New Testament.

In Acts 15 and 23, where letters are being written back and forth, they use *kairein* as their term. James 1:1 is a representation of some of the oldest periods in our New Testament. They're still meeting in synagogues, for example.

They're not in the house churches. And it uses the term greeting. It follows standard Greco-Roman letter format.

Paul does not use *kairein*. Never uses it. He Christianizes his letters.

How does Paul write a letter? Well, as we can see in 1 Corinthians here, in 1.1, as well as in all of the epistles, we'll have something along these lines. Grace and peace are the *kairein* in Paul's format here. That's the greeting.

He has Christianized, but even more than that, as I'll mention to you. Sometimes it's grace, mercy, and peace. Not very often.

Grace and peace dominate. And I think we'll see a reason for that here as I explain a little more about this introduction. So, grace and peace.

kairein, eirein, the word Irene for a woman's name, means peace. Eirein, grace and peace. Now, the Old Testament and Jewish letters outside the Old Testament often use the word peace instead of the word kairein.

For example, in Ezra chapter 4, I'm just going to read from the NRSV for a change here. In Ezra chapter 4, we have an occasion of this. In verse 17 of Ezra 4. The king sent an answer to Rahum, the royal deputy, and Shimshi, the scribe, and the rest of their associates who lived in Samaria, and in the rest of the province beyond the river.

Beyond the river is a fascinating phrase. We're not doing Old Testament, but that's something you might want to look up and see what it means. Now, notice what we've got in the NRSV, the word greeting.

Now, Ezra is using the same format. You can see that these letters are ancient. It was common to use a word like that when you were writing somebody.

There's another example here in 5:7 within Ezra. To Darius, the king, all peace, may it be known to the king. So that letter, instead of saying greeting, which would have been a little too perhaps familiarizing, it uses a word like peace, and that would have been a shalom.

That would have been a well-wish, but it would also have been a term of greeting. So there's not just one way to do this. There are several things going on in these letters.

Furthermore, if we were to look at another book that's not part of the Old Testament canon, or New Testament canon for that matter, is a book, 2 Maccabees. That's why I have the NRSV today. I usually use the NIV because it's just a convenient thing, and it lays open a little easier.

But the reason I have the RSV is because the RSV provides you with some intertestamental books from the Old to the New Testament. And these are very handy. This is called Second Temple Jewish Literature.

It's the literature particularly that was produced in the 3rd and 2nd century BCE, and on and following up into the 1st century. But there are actually four Maccabees. You only get two here.

The RSV only gives you a small portion of that literature. There are actually volumes, two volumes, of Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha literature. There's even a volume on New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

So, there's a lot of literature outside the canonical Bible. Now, the RSV includes it here for historical purposes because it's stuff that's really good. In fact, the church prized it and even preserved it in the Septuagint and some other places as they were working with the Old Testament in Greek.

Now, listen to 2 Maccabees 1:1. The Jews in Jerusalem and those in the land of Judea to their Jewish kindred in Egypt. Now, there's interesting. Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia.

Well, where did people go? Because it was tough to live in Palestine. It wasn't exactly a fertile land. It had so many rocks.

And there were only certain times of the year when you could feed your flocks. They tended to migrate down to Egypt particularly. Some would go down and come back.

We see this in the patriarchal family in the Old Testament. And then there were some who were actually taken captive all the way over into Mesopotamia. To their Jewish kindred in Egypt, greetings and true peace.

So here, and this comes to us in Greek, Maccabees does. It doesn't come to us in Hebrew. It comes to us in Greek.

We have greetings and peace. Now, these are Jewish writings. It is very appropriate and natural for a Jewish writing to use the word peace.

Shalom means may every good thing be toward you. It's a well-wish toward the recipient of the letter. It's used both in personal letters and also in formal sorts of letters.

If we go on down the page, there's a letter to Aristobulus. Verse 10, the people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the Senate and Judas to Aristobulus, who was of the family of the anointed priest, teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jews in Egypt. Once again, Egypt.

Greetings and good health. Now, we see good health used in Ezra. Now, we have it used here.

But we still have the word greetings in both places. So, they tended to embellish, as it were, this initial term of greeting. Kyrene would have been used.

Eirene was used. And the idea of good health. So, we can see that in ancient letters, we have a form.

Just like if I were to write a letter to someone. This has gone away a great deal in the electronic age. When we write emails, sometimes we don't even say hello to the people.

We just word it out. But in the letter-writing period, we would usually say, Dear so-and-so. Well, that was our form.

That was the form in a lot of the Western world for writing letters, particularly in the English setting. Dear so-and-so. And then, we would close the letter with, Sincerely, and then sign the letter.

Well, letters have been written in similar ways for centuries, millennia. We see this in the Bible as well: 2 Maccabees 1:1 and 1:10. Now, 1 Corinthians also follows the 1st-century letter pattern.

It has an introduction. That's in 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, top of page 51. It has a main body from 1:10 all the way through chapter 16:18, a huge main body.

And then, it has a closing in chapter 16, verses 19 to the end of the book. And so, no matter what the size is, it's following a format that's familiar. Those formats are a part of the literary genre.

The letter is a genre, but so are the pieces of it. And we expect certain things to be there. There's one interesting illustration in the New Testament where the letter genre is broken.

Do you know which book in the New Testament does not give the typical greeting, the typical statement of Thanksgiving, or the typical prayer? It's the book of Galatians. Who has bewitched you? Wow! You talk about breaking protocol. That ought to slap us right in the face.

It would have slapped that congregation in the face. When someone stands up and reads that to a congregation, there is no protocol going on. Who bewitched you? That ought to get our attention.

Anything that deviates from the standard. The standard is to have an introduction and a greeting. Now, let's look at 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 and see how it fits in the pattern of a letter opening.

I've given it to you in the middle of page 51—the identity of the senders. Paul, the author, and Sosthenes is internal to the writing here.

Paul and Sosthenes. Sosthenes is an associate. In almost all of the opening letters of Paul, he will name other people, sometimes more than one.

It's sort of interesting, isn't it? Called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. And our brother, Sosthenes. Paul had an entourage.

Timothy and Titus were part of it. Sosthenes is part of it—the only place where he is really mentioned in the New Testament.

There are some ideas about who Sosthenes may have been. I'll let you dig that out from the immense details that are in the commentaries. We just can't talk about all these things.

But see it in synthesis. Paul does not imagine community authorship here. He says, Paul and my brother Sosthenes.

It's a ministry community. Not a community of authorship. Some think that Sosthenes may have been Paul's amanuensis.

Amanuensis is a word you don't hear everyday. It's a word that means somebody who takes dictation and writes things down for you. Remember, in Paul's day, they didn't have tape recorders.

They didn't have typewriters. I'm being facetious, I suppose. But they did have people who were trained to write.

And most likely, when Paul produced his letters, it wasn't that Paul sat down at a table and wrote them. It's that Paul dictated them to individuals. They wrote them.

Many times, they are most likely included in either the salutation or sometimes in the closing of a letter in regard to being part of that community. Paul's entourage. When you think of Paul, I suppose you can get the image of a stern person.

A person who preached for so long people fell out of windows and had to be resurrected. A person who was very powerful in his presence. But when you get into the New Testament, you discover that Paul loved people.

He didn't suffer disagreement sometimes. Sometimes, he let it go. The Book of Romans shows some of this.

He's just glad they're preaching the gospel even if they're being mean to him. But Paul was a person who loved people. He talks about brethren.

He's one of the people dominant in the shift to the use of the word brethren rather than disciple in this epistolary literature. And so, I think that Paul was a man who wanted to embrace, and he did, and he trained individuals. The word disciple never occurs in the epistles.

None of them. There's a verb that means to learn that occurs two or three times. But the noun that we get so used to in the gospels and in the Book of Acts which means it was used contemporary with the time of epistles.

But the epistles writing themselves do not use the metaphor and imagery of disciple. They use the metaphor and imagery of brothers and sisters. The family imagery rather than the apprentice imagery.

And yet, there are plenty of aspects of being an apprentice and working as it were for Paul and with Paul. Paul coins a lot of terms. Fellow laborers.

He coins. Well, instead of just I'm laboring he's saying we're fellow laborers. He sees it as a community.

Watch for signs of that when you're reading the text. Do not just read over it. So, Paul and Sosthenes.

Furthermore, we have the identity of the addressees. Their corporate identity is in verse 2. The church of God which exists in Corinth. The church of God.

Their spiritual identity. Their love by Christ Jesus. By the way, Christ Jesus is a little more formal way to say it than Jesus Christ.

Puts the title Christ first. You know, we don't want to try to create nuances because we know the end results of the relationship with the Corinthians. We know that this letter is not going to be friendly.

We know they weren't being friendly toward him. But we can't take that and read it back in and nuance things from that perspective totally. We can be aware of it.

But we have to be very careful lest we make the writer almost dishonest in how he presents himself. He's not being that way. He's being serious.

I treasure you. God treasures you. In spite of the fact that you're not being very good children.

Alright. To the church of God in Corinth. To those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

He talks about their spiritual identity. Sanctified merely means to set apart. It means set apart in holiness.

Now it says they're sanctified. It states it as a... I'm going to use this word as a forensic fact. It's more than a functional fact.

There are two words that I will use from time to time. Forensic is a term that means the legal aspect. They are legally in Christ Jesus.

They're redeemed. They have that status. They're in Christ.

That's a forensic status. It's a standing before God. Sometimes I'll say this passage is more about function than forensics.

To be functional means to focus on what you're doing or what you should do. There is sanctification in terms of the forensic side, and it is sanctified in terms of the functional side. Be holy for I am holy as Peterson puts it.

And so therefore, we have a lot of loaded language, and you could unpack this, but we want to try to get the big picture and the synthesis. We can't make a book out of every term that's in this text, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ their Lord and ours.

Now, one principle of hermeneutics is to look for repetition as a window into meaning. Now, you may not know what repetition would be in an introduction unless you compare all of the introductions to see what the common denominators are. Galatians stands out because it breaks with common denominators.

But the word Lord is repeatedly used in these early verses of 1 Corinthians. Now, should we stop and think for a moment if repetition is a window into meaning, why does Paul keep pounding them with Lord, Lord, Lord? Well, it's a little precarious to assert what that might mean, but I would like to say that when we get later in the epistle, we see that Jesus being Lord to some of these Corinthians was a bit of a foreign idea.

They weren't being submissive to his Lordship. Perhaps this is anticipating that and pounding it into their heads in a little bit of a way that Jesus is Lord not just your buddy to put it that way. Okay, so we got the salutation, their corporate identity as the church.

I have to be careful because these terms come up over and over again, and I don't want to be too repetitive. I think I'll wait just a moment and come back to the term church because that comes up on the next page. Then there's the salutation proper

in verse 3 where we have this comment Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alright, here we have grace kairene, xaris, excuse me, not the word greeting. We have the word grace, which is Paris, and we have Eirene, which is the word for peace. So, grace and peace be to you.

Both of these are solid Christian terms, and frankly, they're very solid for Jewish thinking, too. In fact, the word peace is particularly that way. I would like to think that when Paul turned the salutation into his religious statement rather than just greetings, which he doesn't use he did it for who he was.

Who was Paul? Paul was a Jew. Not just any old Jew, either. He was a well-trained Jew.

He was probably considered a Pharisee. Not only that, but he was also a Christian Jew. He had accepted Jesus as Messiah.

Grace is a dominant term in imaging the Christian community. It doesn't mean it's not imaging the Old Testament community. It's just the nature of the use of terms at a certain point in history.

And the New Testament has a big portion of Chorus in it. And there's plenty of grace to be had in the Old Testament as well. And peace.

Well, that could be the Jewish side. So, we've got Christian and Jewish nomenclature coming together in the salutation that Paul gives. It's a wonderful thing.

I think it was a natural thing for Paul. He didn't have to have a committee meeting to decide how I should address people. But it just flowed out of him.

We've already seen way, way back in the Old Testament, that more than one term could be used in the greeting to capture the context. Well, Paul's done that in his greetings with grace and peace. And that's one of his dominant greetings.

There's not only the salutatory duo. There is the divine duo of father and son. A grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, where's the spirit? You know if he's going to say two of them why not three of them? Isn't the Trinity serious? Well, remember this. When people raise issues about the persons or the aspects of the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, they find some here, and they find some there, and they find partial here, and they find all of them here. Just remember this.

Friends, there's no jealousy in the Godhead. Writers aren't sitting on the edge of their seats thinking about all the things sometimes that we think about. But it was a natural thing to talk about the father and the son to these Corinthians.

The authority and the connections between Jesus and the Father. Now, someone might jump the gun and say well, maybe he didn't mention spirit because they've messed the spirit up so much over there in chapters 12 to 14 when we see spiritual gifts. Well, once again, how do we read the mind of an author? Did Paul even think that thought? Well, I'm not going to say he didn't, but I'm not real sure that he did, and I don't think frankly that it's really an issue that's worth all that much time.

He just said it like it came to him, as it were. The father and the son. The Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that we'll see this in most translations but maybe not in all of them. God comes first in the structure of God the Father, and Lord comes first in the structure of Lord Jesus Christ. There's one thing for sure here.

He's calling out the big guns as he begins this epistle. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Then we have his statement of thanksgiving in verses 4 through 9. You can see that typical letters that we already read in secular literature and in the Old Testament could have been read in the book of Acts.

We could even look at the book of James. Typically, they don't have quite as long a composition as what they have in most of Paul's epistles. Paul's introductions are usually quite lengthy, and those have a lot to do with the nature of the content that's coming, and he's gearing up for what he's going to say to these audiences.

Let's see what he has to say in verses 4 through 9. One of the terms that's particularly dominant in epistolary greetings from our New Testament writers, and particularly Paul, is the word thanksgiving. In that secular letter, the writer wished his recipient to be well and in good health. Well Paul almost always talks about what he appreciates in relation to the audience that he's addressing.

And here it comes. I thank my God. Thanks be to God for what Paul is starting out here.

That's why I've entitled verses 4 to 9, the thanksgiving. It's a statement of thanksgiving. Look at the outline on page 51.

The statement of the thanksgiving is in verse 4. The reason for thanksgiving is in verses 5 through 7. And the confidence of thanksgiving is in verses 8 and 9. If you're preaching, there's your three-point sermon. You can unpack the details. Let's look at verse 4 just for a moment.

I give thanks to God to my God always concerning you. Let me get my. I'm thinking of three things at once here. Let me get my mind back to this.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus in verse 4. I'm trying to kind of compare a couple of things off the top of my head here. The grace which is given to you in Christ Jesus. I give thanks to my God always concerning you and the grace of God which was given to you in Christ Jesus.

Paul is thankful for the Corinthian believers. He's making that quite clear in his statement here. Not only that, but he goes on in verse 5. You're enriched by God in that regard and in verse 5 I need my glasses is what my problem was.

I can't focus very well. You'll have to excuse me. I've got about three sets of three pairs of glasses I use for different things and reading is one of the things where the print's smaller than I have a problem with.

Alright, so verse 4, verse 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way. Now watch this. With all kinds of what? Speech.

And with all what? Knowledge. Oh, that's interesting. You're not only enriched, but you're enriched by God in these ways.

But not only that, you're endowed by God. Let's just go ahead and see this second part in verse 7. God in verses 6 and 7. God thus confirms our testimony about Christ among you. The implication here is that your work and your character is a proof of our work.

Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift. Whoops, what's that? Do you hear echoes here? Echoes of things that are going to be coming up. Speech, knowledge, and spiritual gifts.

And you don't lack any spiritual gift. He's not criticizing them here. As you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

He will also keep you confident about Thanksgiving. He will also keep you to the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful who has called you into fellowship with his Son.

Jesus Christ, our what? Our Lord. There's Lord again. Now, I've given some bullet points here about this salutation.

In my pre-reading, as I came in here today, my mind is kind of full and almost cluttered with details because commentaries can sometimes take 15 pages on verses

like this to break out all the nuances and the connections with the rest of Scripture. And we just have to be satisfied with trying to catch a glimpse of the significance of these things. First of all, some selective observations.

First of all, consider that a writer's introduction sets up the body of the letter to follow. When you study salutations in relation to letters, you'll be able to see that the absence of a salutation, like in Galatians, sets that up. They probably were running out the doors after they heard that.

The next bullet point. 1-4 is sort of a striving for good attention. There's a Latin phrase, and some have said that Paul was trying to gain their favor in the salutation so that he could beat them over the head later.

I don't think Paul was that kind of person. But I think that Paul was just being honest in the way that he put things. Fitzmeyer says something that this means that the writer says something that the audience wants to hear, and therefore, he gets their attention.

Can you imagine how the Corinthian audience would have perked up when they hear Paul saying these things? Get back into context. Paul and the Corinthians are having a conversation. Communications are going back and forth.

Remember, this is actually 2 Corinthians. Things are going back and forth. There are messengers taking oral messages back and forth.

They know they've done some things that Paul was not happy about. Then they get this letter, and it's read publicly, and he's praising them, and he's telling them how blessed they are and how gifted they are. They must be sitting back and saying what's going on here? Some have tried to say that Paul was being sneaky, but no, no, he was doing what a letter format is supposed to do.

Say something nice about the people you're writing to. Even if it's hard, say it. Look for those things that they're good at.

But you know, as it often is in life, where we have strengths, we also can find our weaknesses. Paul is saying things that are true about them, saying things that he is praising them for, and yet later, he's going to have to come back and do a little bit of work on these categories. Note the absence of a prayer.

Typically, in Pauline salutations, he states things in terms of a prayer for his audience. Well, that's not here. The other thing that is lacking is he does start; it's not lacking, but he says, I always thank my God for him.

Remember I mentioned Thanksgiving is a main category in the salutations as Paul writes. So, everything is kind of normal. Everything is normal.

We who know what's coming can see some triggers, and the audience probably might have thought of those triggers because there was communication between them. At the same time, they're sitting there feeling pretty good. We're glad Paul finally woke up and saw how good we are as he rattles this off to them.

The third bullet. Five times in these nine verses the word Lord is used. In verse 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9. Five times.

That's repetition. Now, sometimes in salutations, we can have divine name repetition, but this one sort of stands out, and I don't think it's farfetched to ask the question, is he ringing their ear about the issue of Lord the Lordship of Christ that should be in their lives. And then the last bullet in 1, 5 to 7 Paul's reason for being thankful for the Corinthians is exactly in the categories that he's going to criticize later.

Look at page 52. The next page. In 1:5 they are enriched in speech and knowledge.

We're going to talk a lot about the tongue, speech, and knowledge. But they're enriched he says. And he's not lying.

He's speaking sincerely. And yet, at the same time, there needs to be correction. In 1:7, the result is that they are endowed with every sort of gift here in verse 7. You do not lack any spiritual gift.

You're not lacking in any charismata. The word gift is not in the Greek. That is a translation.

It's literally just that you're not lacking in spirituality. Or actually, in charismata, we translate that sometimes as a gift. Sometimes we put the adjective spiritual gift with it.

But the fact is that it's not gift in the sense of Christmas. But it is an endowment. In every endowment.

Now the interesting piece of this to me to some extent is that he doesn't include and add in that idea of every spiritual gift. He's called you? Yes, he does in verse 7. I missed it. I'm looking at too many things at once here.

So that you lack in nothing in nothing gifted. This is interesting. I'm glad I'm paying attention.

I should have paid attention earlier. The word spiritual isn't there. We have the 2011 NIV.

Let's just illustrate something. And it says, therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift. Well, charismata is the word.

I'm not saying that it wouldn't be absolutely appropriate to use the word spiritual as an adjective to talk about the subject that he's talking about. But the term's not there. I'm just curious, and I suppose I should know everything from the top of my head.

But I don't. I want to look at 1:7 in the NRSV so that you do not lack any.

They use the same word, spiritual. They're taking charismata in that kind of a context of spiritual gift. But it's the giftedness.

It's the graces. Charismata comes from the same family as xaris. For the word for grace.

You've been graced by God. Okay, we'll talk more about spiritual gifts later, but not right here. That translation can stand, even though I would like to see the adjective actually written out on that one.

So, they're not lacking in one thing. 1.9 goes on. It helps us with the term fellowship or koinonia.

So, look at verse 9. God is faithful who has called you into the fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord. What does fellowship mean here? There's an interesting term in biblical studies. The word fellowship, as you may well know, is the translation of a Greek term called koinonia.

There are actually Sunday schools that are named koinonia. I've seen it on the doors in churches. And that word is often translated fellowship.

But let's think about it for a second. Have you heard the Greek of the New Testament called koine Greek? I think some of you have. koine koinonia What is koine Greek? Koine Greek is common Greek.

The Greek was common to most people living and working in the Greco-Roman world. They weren't fancy classical speakers. They were koine Greek speakers.

Common. Koinonia. We translate that fellowship, and then we put into the term fellowship an amazing amount of baggage.

Which probably was never in the mind of the Apostle Paul. A Baptist supper. We're going to get together on Sunday night and have fellowship.

And you don't have to say it. Everybody knows we're going to eat. We're going to have fellowship with one another.

We often say. That means we're going to be with each other. We're going to talk to one another.

We're going to enjoy some food and so forth. We use that word in our culture in interesting ways. How is it used in the Bible? The word *koinonia* basically means something that is shared in common.

So, when Paul says to them in verse 9, God is faithful through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son. Were you called to go to supper with Jesus? Does this mean that you're called to kind of sit down and have a conversation with Jesus? I don't think so. The fellowship of His Son means you are called to partake in the common salvation that is ours because of Jesus Christ.

It's not talking about fellowship as sharing in the sense of the social community. But what is shared in common, we're called into the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ, means that we're called to share in common what Jesus accomplished as the Son of God. We have salvation.

He brought salvation to us. When we come across the word *koinonia*, we come across the word fellowship, and there's a lot of this when we get into Johannine literature. It really takes on a whole world of itself in John, both the Gospel and 1 John particularly.

We're called to realize that fellowship is not social. Fellowship is what we share in common. Jesus has fellowship with the Father, and we have fellowship with the Son.

It means that we share in common with the Godhead the salvation that He's provided. You can use the word *commune* in some contexts, but it's not the drab idea of just social connection that we have in so many of our cultures. It's much more loaded than that.

Not just having a good time but sharing in common the redemption, the goals, and the task that God has set before us. In the New Testament *koinonia* is more about what is shared in common. To be called into the fellowship of His Son means to have in common eternal life.

To be saved, or however you describe the salvation product, that's what the Corinthians were called into fellowship about—the fellowship of redemption, of eternal life. So, letters, epistles, were written to a gathering of Christ's believers.

A copy arrived, the community gathered, and one of them, probably an elder or someone particularly skilled in reading oral recitation, would read it to the people. And that's how they got their information. They didn't gather, and copies were distributed.

They gathered, and they listened, and they heard. And there's a lot to be said about the orality of this context of communication. The content of an epistle was based on an occasion, just to reiterate a little, for which the writer wrote.

The letter is a one-way conversation. This letter is addressed to the church of God in Corinth. Since Corinth was a sizable city in its time, it's unlikely that the whole group of Christians got together at any one place or, for that matter, at any one time.

To address the church of God at Corinth, the word church in this particular situation is in the singular. The church of God at Corinth. It's looking at the community.

Some have said that perhaps this uniqueness of referring to the church of God is calling forth Paul's later appeal for unity in the church. There is one church diversified, even geographically within that city perhaps, but there is one. This letter would have been circulated most likely around to these individual congregations because there's no way, even in a small sense, that they could have all gathered in one place at one time.

And so, they were probably gathering in cells, as it were, throughout the city. Church comes from the word *ekklesia*, which means we have etymology and meaning. Etymology is what the pieces of the word means.

It means a called out group. The meaning of it is an assembly. This term, *ekklesia*, which is translated church, is applied to Israel.

Israel was an *ekklesia*. It was a gathered assembly of people for a certain purpose. The trades, the guilds, the unions in the first century of workers like the silversmiths at Ephesus and others, they're referred to as *ekklesia*.

They're assemblies of certain people. They're gathered for a common purpose many times. So, Israel, guilds, and we translate *ekklesia* in these epistolary contexts as church.

But we've got to try to remember that we're talking about an assembly. We're not talking about the steeple buildings that we think of in terms of our own culture. Imagine yourself as a first-century Christian in Corinth.

You hear this introduction, and you're getting ready to listen. As long as it is, I wonder if they were able to even read it at one setting. But nonetheless, you're getting ready to listen to what Paul has to say to the church in relation to these questions.

What would be going through your mind? Try and put yourself back into that setting. It's fascinating, isn't it? To think about all the things that would have been flooding through the minds of the people sitting out there. And the auditor begins to read.

You're waiting for rocks to be thrown, as it were because you've challenged Paul. You've pushed him. And he's no small contender.

And he's going to come back with the right hook. And all of a sudden he's saying all these nice things about you. That would have been an interesting situation.

Maybe when we get to heaven, we'll have some video replays of these things so that we can address our curiosity and learn whether we were thinking correctly or not and see the whole picture. As we depart, there is a phrase that I could spend a lot of time on, but I'm not going to do that because I'd just be yeasting out this particular part of the book. But it's that phrase that Paul says in verse 1. Paul, a called apostle.

Not just any apostle, but a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God. Now, I've written a book called *Decision Making God's Way, A New Model for Knowing God's Will*. I've done extensive work on the question of what is God's will? How does God's will operate in the world? How do we discern God's will? I've given you the bibliography.

This book you might find a print item of it, but you can get it from Logos. You don't have to have the whole Logos program to get books from them. You can read it.

It's both in English and in Spanish if you happen to be Spanish speaking. This book is available from Logos in both languages. I'll just say briefly that when it says that he's called by the will of God, that's referring to God's sovereignty in Paul's life.

God got Paul by the nap of the neck on the road to Damascus. This was an important event in history. Paul was stubborn, and God wasn't going to wait much longer or tolerate much more of it.

He got him by the nape of the neck. He said, Paul, I'm going to show you what great things are going to suffer for me. From that day on, Paul was a changed man.

God sovereignly reached out and grabbed Paul in that regard and put him into ministry. Paul establishes that fact at the very beginning of this letter because as we get into chapters 1 to 4, we're going to discover that people were pressing against Paul's authority. In a sense, it is against Paul's credentials.

And even in the salutation, Paul settles that matter and states it in no uncertain terms. Well, this is sort of hard for me. I'll just be honest with you as we do these tapes because I like a classroom of 10 to 12 people where we come in a pre-prepared way, and we have more interchange in questions.

I'm not just the talking head. It's a little difficult in some ways when you're dealing with so much material. I faltered a little bit in my speech here.

I apologize for that. I'm trying to find my way a little bit in terms of how to deal with a mass of material so that it's not boring and yet, at the same time, get certain facts across to you. Hopefully, within the context in which they sit.

I'll probably get better at that as we go along. But for the time being, I hope you have a good week, and I'll see you in the next lecture. Have a good day.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.